

Since 1994 when **Nicholas Payton** made his recording debut as a leader with *From This Moment*, the trumpeter has been lauded as a significant, top-tier voice in jazz. Even though he started out as a “young lion of jazz,” heralded as one of the new-generation guardians of the hard bop flame, Payton consistently committed himself to discovering his voice outside of the strict confines of that rearview mirror approach to the music.

While his jazz journey has taken him down many roads – from heritage artist to electric experimenter – the 34-year-old trumpeter arrives at a new plateau of jazz maturity with *Into the Blue*, his ninth album and his first for Nonesuch. It’s at once a nod to the past and a leap into the future. “It’s an amalgam of every recording I’ve done up until now,” says Payton. “As a musician, as an artist, you’re always trying to zero in on the bull’s eye as a means of becoming a better version of yourself. With *Into the Blue*, I’ve been able to find the kind of music that’s more inclusive of all of my life. The approach and the ideas of my music have become more singular, more cohesive. I had no agenda in terms of a specific genre or style, only to be true to who I am now.”

*Into the Blue* is a collection of ten tunes steeped in melody and groove that Payton says “embodies the sensibilities of beauty, elegance and simplicity” and delivers “danceable tempos.” He adds, “The true staples of jazz for me—the hallmarks of the music throughout its history – are love songs and the element of dance.” In addition to seven originals that range from the funky upbeat to the melancholic slow burn, the album includes two tunes by the trumpeter’s bassist/composer father, Walter Payton (the opening love song written for his wife, “Drucilla,” and his walking bass line-driven “Nida,” a celebration of his two sons, Nicholas and Dario) and a cover of the Jerry Goldsmith song “Chinatown,” from the movie of the same name. Joining Payton, who also sings on the hushed ballad, “Blue,” are acoustic and Fender Rhodes pianist Kevin Hays, acoustic bassist Vincent Archer, drummer Marcus Gilmore and percussionist Daniel Sadownick.

Instead of being recorded in a New York studio, Payton felt that it was fitting for the setting to be in his New Orleans hometown. “The focal point of the album is strength in subtlety and understatement, a quiet revolution of sorts through love,” he says. “Even though the city has undergone tremendous change lately, it still represents a consistent foundation for me.”

Born into a musical family (he remembers sitting under the piano while his father rehearsed with his band) and mentored by two Crescent City jazz masters (Clyde Kerr Jr. at the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts and Ellis Marsalis at the University of New Orleans), Payton was well-prepared to leap into the jazz fray when he emerged on the New York in the early 1990s. He impressed fellow New Orleans native and Jazz at Lincoln Center Artistic Director, Wynton Marsalis and was a regular in the early years of programming at the institution. Payton went on to put his own spin on Louis Armstrong-associated music on his sophomore CD, the appropriately-titled 1995 disc *Gumbo Nouveau*. While over the next several years, Payton continued to hone his craft working with such jazz legends as Doc Cheatham (on their Grammy Award-winning 1997 eponymous duo), Hank Jones, Elvin Jones, and Ray Brown, in 2003 he boldly moved beyond the straight-ahead. He shocked the jazz world with his adventurous CD *Sonic Trance*, an exhilarating plugged-in outing infused with elements of hip-hop, electronica, and effects-driven trumpeting.

For more information about Mr. Payton, you can go to his website at:

<http://www.nicholaspayton.com/>